Opinions

Everybody has one...

The Mission

Many organizations define their purpose through a mission statement. Some mission statements are long and incorporate many details. Others are short with meaningful ideas that are packed in a few words. The best mission statements are those that are long enough to define the purpose but short enough to remember.

Union County Fire Department's mission statement is: "The

mission of Union County Fire Department is to prevent or minimize loss of life and property due to fire or other emergencies." This is something that we review on a regular basis and we strive to live by every day. To fulfill that mission, the members of the department perform many activities and duties. Some of the mission fulfilling activities performed by fire-



fighters include preparing for emergencies. We check every piece of equipment and vehicle in our inventory to ensure that it is in

Responding to calls is probably the most known and recognizable way in which we fulfill our mission. UCFD responds to fires, rescues, motor vehicle accidents, hazardous materials responses, medical calls, and just about any other emergency imaginable. We respond while remembering our mission to prevent or minimize loss of life and property.

good working order and able to respond at a moment's notice.

Training is a major activity that is performed almost every day. This is where we learn how to respond to and mitigate the various different types of emergencies. We must have training on how to extinguish fires of all kinds and how to respond to all types of medical emergencies. There are other areas such as technical rescue, wilderness rescue, auto extrication, hazardous materials... all of which have specific training that we must be familiar with. Training allows us to respond effectively, efficiently, and with confidence to resolve the incident for which we are responding.

The department also has many programs that contribute to fulfilling our mission. Two of the main and most effective programs are the Smoke Alarm and Public Education programs. The Smoke Alarm Program's goal is to have a working smoke alarm in every home. The Public Education Program provides information on fire safety and preparedness. There are many other department programs that contribute to our mission.

See Dyer, page 5A

Questioning Teens

She was only 17 or 18 years old when we met. I'm not sure if her noisy self-confidence was a bluff or self-deception. Either way, she had her peers cowed. She figured she had worked out all the answers about life and the universe, including her loosely articulated view of nature as an impersonal god.

The details of what I said to her are less important here than her response. I simply described the evidence science gives All Things for a Creator who is distinct from the New

material world. She listened with an incredulous look on her face. "This is the first time," she replied, "that anyone has ever explained all this to me!" Her response fits a pattern not



unfamiliar - teenagers with unanswered questions.

According to Barna research, most teenagers in the U.S are spiritually open. Barna defines that term as believing the supernatural exists and being curious and willing to explore spirituality in a positive way. Their research (2022) shows that 74% of U.S. teens are moderately or highly open to spirituality. In other words, they have questions. The worst-case scenario is for their questions to be dismissed by those they trust enough to ask.

Sadly, that is what happened to Larry Sanger. He was raised in church and attended regularly until his early teens. Even though church and God began to factor less into his lifestyle, he remained open. In his late teens he approached a pastor with hard questions. "I was not merely being rebellious," he writes. "I really needed help thinking these things through. But the pastor had no clear or strong answers. He seemed to be brushing me off. I had the impression that he felt threatened by me. The damage was quickly done: being met with hostile unconcern by a person I expected to be, well, pastoral confirmed me in my disbelief."

It's not just pastors, but all believers who have a calling to be available to the questioner, to be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:15). If it's a difficult topic, you can still dignify the question and offer to help find answers. You're not responding to the question, but the

I'm glad to say that did not end Sanger's God story. He re-

See Fowler, page 5A

From Your Commissioner

Accountability and transparency. I would like to talk about these two things. I do try to make myself available whenever someone wants to meet with me. You can always make an appointment by calling 706-439-6000. You can also attend the monthly County meeting. Periodically, I may also hold a town hall meeting where everyone can be heard on local topics. Pay close attention to the newspaper, the Union County Union website, and Facebook as well. Many times, we use these tools for sharing

current project information.

If you would like certain of-

ficial documents, we have a process

for that too. Union County Govern-

County Commission Collins

ment is subject to the Georgia Open Records laws. If a document exists, we should be able to provide it through an Open Records Request. That request can be made online through the website or by paper submission. You can call our office for more information about that submission process.

Occasionally, I receive a complaint or a request anonymously through the website or through email. Do I take these into consideration? Absolutely. I take all requests into consideration, and we investigate all serious complaints. The problem we face is that if something is sent to us anonymously, we have no way to follow up; we have no way to get further necessary information; we also cannot let you know that we looked into an issue or completed the request. So, we will definitely take your request, but you should be extra careful to provide all necessary information including various ways that we can use to get back in touch with you. However, there is one place where you cannot remain anonymous, and that's when you call E-911. All E-911 phone calls are electronically recorded and are subject to Open Records laws. This means that if a member of the public asks for an E-911 call, Union County Government has to supply the information. If you have a non-emergency problem and want it to be anonymous, you can always call 706-439-6038. When using this number, your call

On that note, sometimes missing road signs or bad road conditions create hazardous situations. We get those calls too. The county has over 500 miles of county-maintained roads. The Road Department needs your assistance when you see a sign that is

See Collins, page 5A

Continuous Creation

The Mystery of Continuous Creation By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher "In the beginning G-d created the heaven

and the earth." This familiar verse from Genesis holds a deeper truth that most people miss - one that could transform how we view both the uniand our

own potential for Modern

physics tells us that a beginning. But here's something

even more remarkable: our universe's existence right now, in this very moment, depends on an ongoing act of creation. G-d isn't just the architect who drew up the plans and walked away - He's actively sustaining every atom of existence, every

second of every day. Think of it like tossing a ball into the air. To someone watching, the ball appears to fly under its own power. But anyone who's played catch knows what happens next – the ball reaches its peak, then falls back to earth as the initial force wears off.

See Hambourger, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Thank You

I would like to thank the people of Union County, the Sports Medicine Group at Union General Orthopedics and Dr. Doroodchi for the

fine service I received during my recent knee replacement surgery. Daniel Williams

Turtletown, TN

Dear Editor,

Dear Democrats

Dear Editor,

I must say I'm sorry, but I feel that after what I witnessed a couple weeks ago, as long as I have breath in my lungs and the ability to speak, I have to say something.

I watched the President's speech to a joint

assembly of Congress this month. What I saw shocked me. In the first place, sadly, I don't have very high expectations of Democrats. As of late, all I've seen them do is spread falsehoods, and then when it's pointed out that they were incorrect, they either don't care or feel that they are above everyone else to even issue a response. What I saw was Democrats, The Party of The Downtrodden and Victims, who couldn't even be bothered to acknowledge the family of a slain young woman, the mother of a slain 12-year-old little girl, an African American child cancer patient/survivor, and the son of a slain L.A. County Sheriff's Deputy who had just gotten an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. What I saw were Democrats sitting there, and I mean SITTING THERE I don't think they stood for anything all night, with scowls on their faces acting like petulant children who are upset because they just got their fa-

See Rains, page 5A

A God of Wrath

Dear Editor, Let's suppose that the God in heaven was only a God of wrath. Whenever you messed up, He would punish you somehow and get great joy from it. That God would be laughing so hard to see you suffering that He would split another galaxy to create a place of tormenting hell when you died. A God who would be well pleased when we argued and always talked bad about others. If there was only a God of wrath, there would be no need for churches or even to pray or worship such an evil God, and we would delight in all the gusto in this life, because there would be no hope

for a brighter day to come. Though there is a God of wrath, praise God there is also a God of pure love, a love that is everlasting and will never end. A God who knows the pain and suffering that we endure in this old sinful world, but there is hope, my dear friend,

See Combs, page 5A

Shawn Jarrard

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Derek Richards

America is BACK

As we were reminded on Tuesday, March 4, America is back.

President Trump delivered a historic joint address to Congress, highlighting his wins for the American people as he works to get our country back on track.

Speaking for an hour and 40 minutes, the President touted his executive actions, discussed how Congress can deliver his sweeping legislative agenda,





and presented his vision for our new Golden Age. The energy in the Capitol was electric, as my Republican colleagues and I cheered on the President and his victorious message.

An overarching theme of President Trump's remarks was the return to common

As the President said, "What I have just described is only a small fraction of the commonsense revolution that is now, because of us, sweeping the entire world. Common sense has become a common theme, and we will never go back. Never. Never going to let that happen.'

It's simply common sense to secure our borders, deport illegal aliens, remove biological males from women's sports, refocus our military on lethality, and eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal government. Step by step, President Trump is restoring sanity and commonsense policies as he works to undo the damage that Joe Biden and Kamala Harris inflicted

I was honored to attend President Trump's joint address on behalf of the Ninth District, and I truly believe it was his best speech yet.

As expected, my Democrat colleagues didn't think so.

Shortly after President Trump started speaking, Congressman Al Green (D-TX) rudely interrupted his remarks. Speaker Johnson repeatedly gave Rep. Green opportunities to sit down, but he refused - shouting and raising his cane toward the President. The Sergeant at Arms ultimately removed Green from the House Chamber. As you may know, the House censured Rep. Green for disrupting and disrespecting President Trump's joining address. Our vote, which passed including ten of his own Democrat colleagues. reaffirmed that this childish behavior has no

Several other Democrats followed Green's theatrics in other ways, displaying signs, jeering, and even walking out during the President's remarks. Yet it was Democrat lawmakers' silence that spoke the greatest volume.

Predictably, Democrats refused to ap-

Todd Forrest Lowell Nicholson

See Clyde, page 5A

My Curly-Haired Baby

I didn't mind the phrase when I was very young, but, as I grew into my teenage years I felt embarrassed by my mother's pet name for me, "My curly-haired baby." I remember coming home from a hiking trip with a bunch of boys from church. Mom met us in the parking

lot, and while she tussled my hair she asked, "How is my curly-haired baby?" The boys rode me pretty hard about that for a long time. I don't know exactly



how the phrase originated, but, mom still uses that term from time to time. The term may have come from an incident which occurred when I

My Daddy walked away from a baseball scholarship at Arkansas because he missed my mother. So, he came home and married my mother in 1957. Dad got a job at a textile mill in Hackleburgh, Alabama. They paid him to work part time and play on the mill's traveling baseball team. I was born a little over a year later in 1958. Daddy didn't make much money, probably not much more than a \$1 an hour. The house we lived in was a renter house on my grandfather's farm located about a quarter mile south of my

The house was an old clapboard house built by my grandfather's brother. An old coalfired potbellied stove was used to heat the house. We did have electricity. The lights of the house were nothing more than screw-in light bulb sockets with hanging down chains used to turn them on and off. The house was not built very tight. The linoleum rug would rise up from the floor when the wind would blow outside. The house had no running water. We had an outhouse and a well where we would retrieve our washing, drinking and cooking water.

During the winter time we all slept together to stay warm. I was only 3-4 months old that cold December night. Mom said she awoke to the sound of me crying. She felt for me in the bed and could not find me. She woke up Dad in a panicked voice and said, "Somebody has took our baby." They could hear me crying, and Dad said, "Your voice sounded as if you were going farther away." So, Dad reached for his shotgun and ran outside looking for the kidnapper. You should remember we were located 7 miles from the nearest town. Our nearest neighbors were my grandparents, and they were a quarter mile away. Why would anyone come to our house to steal

While Dad was running around the house, Mom calmed down enough to logically think about the situation and looked between the bed

See Cummings, page 5A

Chamber 2025

Last week I mentioned the hard work our school system is doing to prepare our students for the workforce and for the next level they may pursue in their educational endeavors. This week I would like to give a huge shout-out to our First Responders. In the last week or two it seems as if there has been a

lot going on, from challenging weather to individuals attempting to elude enforcement. We are blessed to have the group of

County Chambe Steve Rowe

Blairsville



First Responders protecting our community that we do. Thank you to Sheriff Shawn Dyer, Police Chief Bear Baxter and Fire Chief David Dyer and their departments for all they do to keep us safe and our streets free of drugs. It takes a good school system, great public safety, and a good health system to make a community strong, and I think we have some of the best.

With the warm weather arising, that means it is time to hit the greens; our annual Golf Tournament is now open for registration. Better hurry

See Chamber, page 5A

Garden Ready?

Spring officially starts on March 20, but we still have a while to go before we are past the last chance of frost. Let's talk about some ways that you can plan ahead to make sure that you are garden ready when the time arrives.

If you haven't already, I would recom-

mend taking a soil sample and bringing it to the Extension Office. The soil test report will give you recommendations for lime and fertilizer that your garden



will need. Recommendations can be given for people who want to use organic fertilizers too. If your soil needs lime it is best to get the soil test in as quickly as possible because lime takes 6-9 months to be fully active in the soil. I have seen a number of people do soil tests on beds that are 100% compost. These samples typically have a pH of around 7.5 which is too high for most plants. Generally, plants like to have a soil pH in

In our area is recommended to wait until mid-May to start putting plants outside. By this time the soils have warmed up enough that seed germination will be better and we are past the threat of frost. Some years it may be possible to plant earlier than mid-May, depending on the weather. Mid-May is good general, conservative

If you are going to be planting from seed in the garden, you can begin buying the seeds that you're going to plant, if you haven't already done so. If you are going to be growing your own transplants under protection, it's recommended that you start them six to eight weeks before putting them outside. A heat pad and grow light make a big difference if you are trying to start your plants indoors. Growing your own transplants takes more work, but it can give you a wider selection of plants than if you just shop for transplants at a garden center. I do recommend using transplants over seed when possible, because it will give you a stronger stand.

Before you plant put some thought into the layout of your garden. Make sure that you have a place that has plenty of sun. Ideally at least 8 hours a day. For a vegetable garden think about crop rotation if you have been planting in the same spot for a few years. For a pollinator garden think about including as much diversity of flower color and flower shape as possible. This will encourage the most beneficial insects. and support a wide variety of pollinators. Consider plants of different heights, native, and non-

Spring is the best time to plant summer annuals. I know there is a strong temptation to

See Williams, page 5A

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CummingS...continued from Page 4A

and the wall of the house. There I was, lodged between the bed and the wall. She picked me up and hugged me tight. She said she carried me outside and watched by the light of the full moon as my Daddy ran around the house in his long john underwear. All the while he was threatening the kidnappers with his shotgun. After the fourth trip around the house he was losing his breath, so he stopped. Momma looked at Daddy and said, "I found my

curly-haired baby." A few years before I retired from the Canning Plant, I was driving to work one morning listening to the Blue Grass Channel. A song came on by Mack Wiseman called "My Curly-Haired Baby." I pulled into the parking lot and listened as the song played through to its entirety. A picture formed in my mind of my mother's family sitting around an old radio in the 1940's while listening to the Grand Ole Opry. I could just see my Paw Paw Adams sitting there across from Grand Maw. I could also see Ray, little Shirley with Ralph, Carolynn and the baby Debra.

A tear came into my eye as I listened to Wiseman's rich baritone voice sing the lyrics of the tune. Later I learned that the song was released in the 1940s when Mom, Shirley, was a little girl. I asked her if she remembered it and a smile came to her face. I now know why she called me, "Curly-Haired

Kains.. continued from Page 4A

vorite toy taken away from them by their parents and put into a

Here's the thing: When intelligent people make mistakes, they admit their mistakes, learn from them and then go forward doing their best to not make the same mistakes again. Over the last four years Democrats have made a lot of mistakes. So much so that the American People took them to task and voted them out

of office last November. Since that day, here's where we stand. Democrats lost the Presidency. Democrats lost their majority in the Senate and failed to gain a majority in the House. Democrats do not control the Supreme Court. Democrats have no power in any of the three branches of our government. Most people would look at that and think that Democrats have a lot of soul searching to

What was seen during the President's speech showed one thing and one thing only: Democrats haven't learned one doggone thing. They were consumed by arrogance. They were looking down their noses and sometimes even rolling their eyes at every comment that was made with which they didn't agree. It was as if they truly believe they are always correct 100% on each and every issue, have all the answers, and we should just sit down, shut up and let them rule – sorry – govern us the way they see fit.

And the funniest or saddest thing of all is Democrats only have themselves and their disastrous policies to blame for the situation that they now find themselves in. It would seem that they have forgotten Einstein's Theory of Insanity, which states: Insanity is repeating the same action over and over again expecting a different result. According to that theory, since Democrats won't or can't admit the mistakes they've made and continue to follow the same strategy they have followed in the past, they're insane. That may sound harsh, but all one has to do is pay attention, look around, and they will see what

I'm talking about. I hope and pray that some common ground can be found between Democrats and Republicans and we can move forward as a united country. However, I have to say that, from what I saw during the speech, if Democrats

can't learn from their mistakes,

that day is very far off or may never come at all.

Now, a letter writer recently wrote that they have a problem. They asked a few questions. "How does a nonelected billionaire from South Africa have the authority to obtain access to the private data of American citizens? And why is Congress, and more specifically, our representative to Congress, allowing this to take place?"

I would say this to that letter writer, hindsight being 20/20, it's painfully obvious now that Joe Biden's cognitive health was going downhill for at least two to three of his final years in office. A President who was that cognitively compromised should have been removed from office via the 25th Amendment. Biden wasn't. My question to the letter writer is this: Who was running the country? I believe the answer is unelected paid staffers and aides, and they were running the country by proxy because Biden couldn't do it.

Letter writer, if you don't or didn't have any problem with unelected staffers and aides running the country and pushing their policies on the American people while your choice for President was in office, why do you have a problem with a naturalized American Citizen who just happens to be a billionaire running one government agency now that another President is in office? You shouldn't have any problem with that based on the

For years y'all rebuffed anyone who questioned Biden's cognitive health when y'all knew the man was way past his prime. You didn't have a problem with the unelected anonymous people who were governing in his stead. Your letter is nothing more than selective outrage. You're not mad at something when the people you support do it, but you get upset when the people you don't support do the same thing. Elon Musk was appointed to run D.O.G.E., one government agency, by the current President of the United States. That is why he has the ability and authority to do what he's doing, and that's also why our Representative is

fine with him doing it. I'm sorry if you can't handle that, but there's an old saying: What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

May God continue to Bless America, Claude Rains Jr.

Clyde... continued from Page 4A

plaud the Trump Administration's incredible work to get our fiscal house in order, cut taxes for hardworking Americans, deport illegal aliens, and bolster our national security. Yet their rejection of several remarkable Americans marked a new low for the Left.

During his joint address, President Trump honored Laken Riley and Jocelyn Nungaray, two young girls brutally murdered by illegal aliens; Payton McNabb, a talented high school athlete who suffered a traumatic brain injury at the hand of a male playing in her girls volleyball match; Marc Fogel, a teacher the Administration freed from Russia after being detained and sentenced to 14 years in a penal colony; and D.J. Daniel, a 13-year-old boy battling brain cancer who was sworn in as an honorary U.S. Secret Service agent.

Democrat lawmakers staved seated and refused to recognize these precious moments. It's apparent that the Left is having an identity crisis - yet this behavior reveals they

might be broken beyond repair. Nevertheless, President Trump remains focused on finishing the work he started. Rest assured, my Republican colleagues and I are committed to delivering on the President's America First agenda so our great country will be safer, stronger, and prosperous once

Collins... continued from Page 4A

bent, knocked down, or missing. It also needs to know about bad potholes, or any other issue related to hazardous road conditions. If you come across any of these, please call the road department directly at 706-439-6062, and someone will address the issue.

I'm a supporter of transparency and accountability. If someone has a request and if that request falls within my authority, let's talk about it.

Combs... continued from Page 4A

in a merciful and gracious God who wants to shower us with countless blessings from the cross where God's only begotten son died for all humanity and a God who delights in His children who serve Him faith-

God's word is still to be taken seriously when it comes down to one's soul and where that soul will spend all eternity after death comes. A lot of folks just shuffle off to Buffalo without a care about who God is, and sadly, His wrath is coming soon to those who have looked the other way, because to them there is no God. There is no doomsday coming. There is no judgment of sinners, but oh how wrong they are, and soon those who rejected Christ will stand in awe when they hear the words - Depart from Me, I never knew you. WOW!!! I pray with all my heart you will search your heart before it's too late. Frank F. Combs

Hambourger... continued from Page 5A

Without continuous input of energy, motion stops. The same principle applies to our entire universe on a grand scale.

Farmers understand this idea intuitively. A planted field doesn't maintain itself. Each season's crop requires constant nurturing – water, sunlight and care. Remove any of these sustaining forces, and the crop fails. The universe works the same way, but on an infinite scale. G-d is continuously creating every aspect of existence anew, every single moment. If this divine sustaining force were to pause even for an instant, the entire universe would simply cease to exist, reverting to absolute nothingness.

This renewal isn't limited to the physical world. Every morning, when we open our eyes, something extraordinary happens. According to Jewish tradition, our souls are returned to us completely renewed, pristine and fresh. The first prayer Jews say upon waking – Modei Ani - acknowledges this profound daily gift: our soul being restored to us with fresh potential, unmarked by yesterday's mistakes or limitations. It's like receiving a brand new computer each morning, with all the processing power intact but none of the accumulated clutter and cached files that slow it down.

This isn't just some abstract philosophical concept. The continuous nature of creation reveals something profound about our own lives. Since G-d creates a brand-new world at every moment, we too have the power to create brandnew realities for ourselves. Each instant offers a clean slate, free from the weight of past mistakes or seemingly unchangeable circumstances.

Think about what this means: your life isn't like a movie playing on autopilot. It's more like a series of photographs, each one a fresh opportunity to compose something new. The limitations you felt a moment ago don't have to constrain what's possible now. The habits that seemed unbreakable yesterday don't have to control your choices today.

This understanding transforms how we view personal change. Too often, people feel trapped by their past decisions, their established patterns, or their perceived limitations. They might think, "This is just who I am" or "It's too late to change." But if G-d is creating the universe anew each moment, then we too can start fresh at any time.

Every morning when you open your eyes, you're not just waking up to the same old world you're witnessing an entirely new creation. Your past doesn't have to dictate your future. Your struggles from yesterday don't have to define your today. Each

Williams... continued from Page 4A

plant other things too. Perennials do best if planted in the fall or winter. Planting perennials in the spring means that you will need to do a lot of watering over the summer to make sure

that they survive. If you have questions about starting a garden contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Wil-

Fowler...

liams@uga.edu.

continued from Page 4A ceived an education, including a PhD in philosophy. He became co-founder of Wikipedia. In 2025, he published a lengthy essay entitled, "How a Skeptical Philosopher Becomes a Christian." It is his personal account of finally finding answers to his questions, and pro-

fessing faith in Jesus Christ. As for the self-confident young lady, I pray that she finds others willing to dignify her questions and help her find truth. That may be you.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A The citizens and visitors of Union County can rest assured that Union County Fire Department knows, understands, and strives to fulfill its mission to prevent or minimize loss of life and property due to

fire or other emergencies. Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

and get your team registered, 'cause they go fast! Visit our Chamber Calendar for upcoming events. From Young Professionals to Lunch and Leads, to Eggs & Issues, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

Thank you, First Responders, for keeping us safe in Blairsville!

moment, surely we can recrement of creation at a time. ate ourselves, our relationships,

THE NORTH GEORGIA NEWS

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated The power to start over to serving spiritual seekers isn't just a comforting thought of all backgrounds on behalf – it's woven into the very fabric of Chabad of Rural Georgia. of reality. At any given moment, Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer who supports commuregardless of where you are or what came before, you can have nities throughout the regional South. You can contact them at a genuine do-over. G-d is showy@tasteoftorah.org. ing us how it's done, one mo-

Page 5A

moment offers a divine reset

March 19, 2025

and our life paths.

button, a chance to begin again. This isn't about denying the past or ignoring consequences. Rather, it's about recognizing the profound truth that existence itself is being renewed constantly by divine will. And if G-d can create the universe anew each